the artist :)

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but i'm a performer!! i can't wear a mask on stage!

same! let's talk about it!!

COVID SAFETY theatre kid edition!!

* or performing arts in general but i only know things about theatre ♡

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disclaimer!!

I am not a medical OR a theatre professional! I am just one silly little guy with a musical theatre B.A. who is disabled and did my first community theatre show since The Before Times this spring. It's been some trial and error, and performing at all is a risk not everyone can take. This is just what i've learned in my efforts to keep myself and my castmates healthy enough to keep singing!

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some resources for you!

Newlevan's aforementioned zine, complete with all their sources cited at the end if you wanna look deeper into the science:

A super helpful article by Ezra Tozian guiding actors through negotiating covid protections with their theatres! If you're a professional it's very focused on those settings, if you're not most of it still applies

Mask blocs!!!! This will open google maps to help you find the closest one to you:

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Mask blocs!!!! This will open google maps to help you find the closest one to you:

i'm still not sure about masking during rehearsals. how is anyone gonna see me act???

Listen man I'm not your dad. I can't make you do anything. But it's live theatre! You're performing for the back of the balcony babey!

If you need any encouragement that it can be done here are some real photos of me at a rehearsal where I was told that my reactions to people being talented were very funny

thanks for listening!!!

stay safe!!!

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wait, why do i still have to worry about covid?

Because people are still being disabled by covid on a huge scale! Our current vaccines help reduce hospitalizations and death from acute infections, but we still don't have one that stops the spread or prevents long term damage. Even mild or asymptomatic infections can lead to long covid, no matter how young and healthy you are!

A high quality mask like a KN95, KF94, or N95 is the most effective tool we have against covid and other airborne illnesses, especially to protect disabled people.

Newlevant.com has a great zine that sums it up, I also have a ton of info in my insta* story highlights! Come back when you're caught up!

so how can you make your shows safer?

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auditions & callbacks!

I'm masked up while I'm waiting until I'm in the room. I usually have it on when I walk in so the table sees it before I take it off - if me protecting myself and others is a dealbreaker I don't wanna work with them!

Not doing this for a living means I can afford to lose a role over this - professionals do that at your own discretion!

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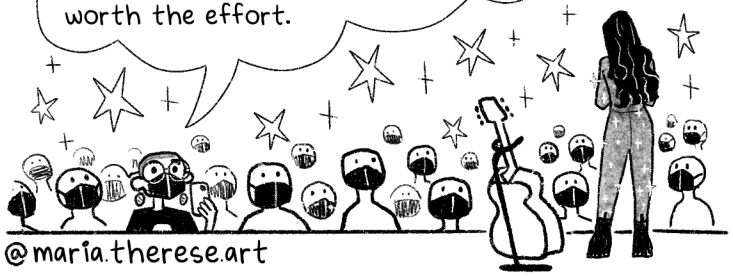
I've seen artists like Kimya Dawson and Jensen McRae put a ton of work into making their concerts safer and collab with local mask blocs to provide masks for everyone. Kimya even did her whole show with a mask on! While solo artists playing their own music may have more freedom than actors, I would love to see that kind of effort and care in theatre spaces.

If we want to address the accessibility problem in theatre, it starts with our own actions. You may not be able to single-handedly make all theatre spaces safe for all disabled people. But whether this is your job or your hobby, you have power! Not only can you show your peers what's possible, but you can show disabled performers that someone in their community still cares about them. We are worth the effort.



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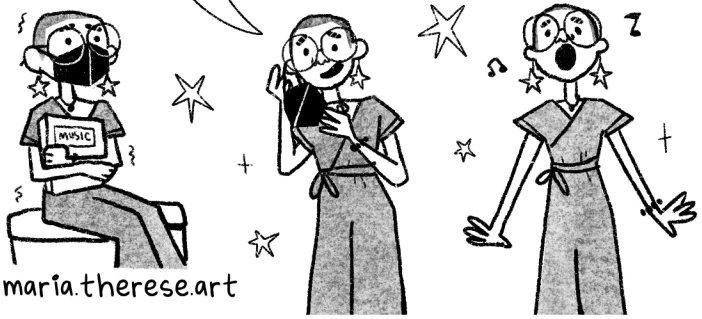

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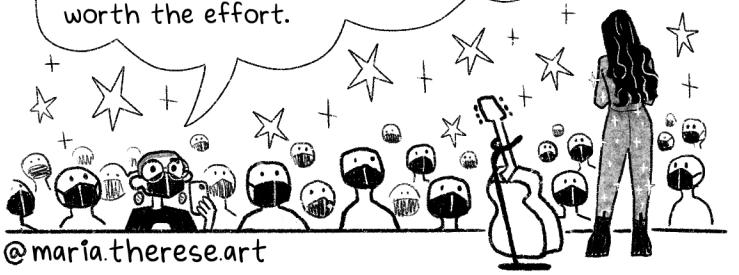

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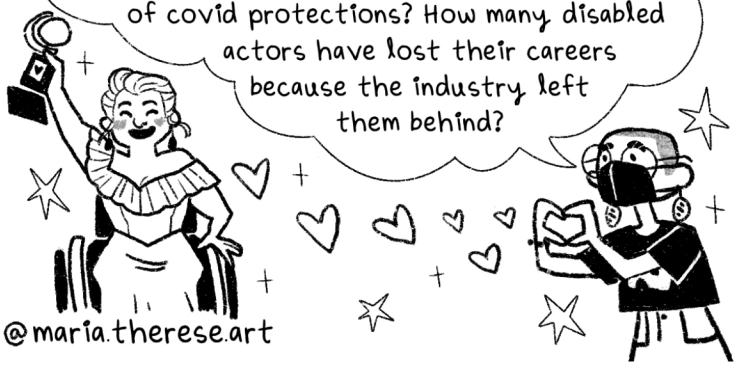
I've never heard anyone brag about how inclusive their industry is more than (white cis able bodied) theatre people. But the truth is that theatre - from Broadway to your nephew's middle school production of Finding Nemo Jr. - has so much work to do to be truly inclusive for marginalized communities. Disabled people are no exception. Even Tony award winner Ali Stroker had to wait in the wings when her win was announced in 2019 instead of sharing that moment with her peers because there was no ramp from the audience to the stage.

Disabled people have been excluded from theatre long before 2020. And we've had a few wins! But systemically, not much has changed. How many have had to give up performing due to the lack of covid protections? How many disabled actors have lost their careers because the industry left them behind?



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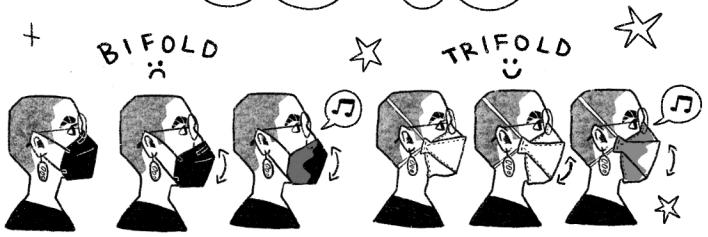
rehearsals!

I stay masked up during the whole rehearsal process up until mics come in. No one had an issue with this when I was ensemble - I can't speak for principal roles and how important it is that everyone sees your face at any point, but it worked for me!

I tested a few different masks and the 3M aura N95 is easiest for me to sing in. Bifold KN95s would slip and slide everywhere while I was singing, but a good trifold moves with your jaw!

note: 3M auras do leave pretty visible marks on my face due to their tight seal - keep that in mind if you know they'll need photos of your face that day! Try a few different styles if you can and see what works best for you!



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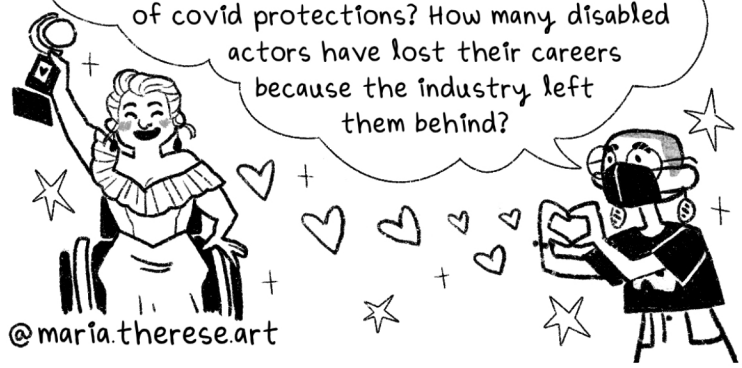

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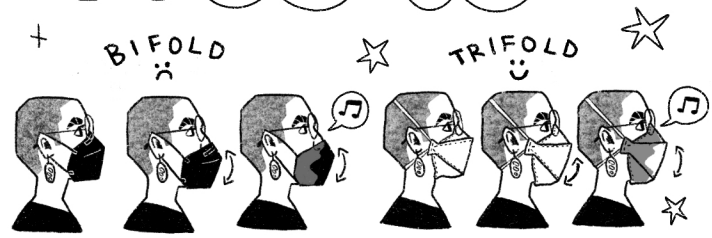

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tech & performances!

I keep my mask on until it's time for makeup and it goes right back on when I greet friends in the audience after the show. I take extra precautions during this time, testing regularly and isolating as much as possible so the cast, crew, and audiences are some of the only people I'm ever around. I even take time off my day job if I can afford it!

If I have <u>any</u> symptoms, even if I'm getting multiple negative covid tests, I stay home until I'm symptom-free. The last thing I want is to spread any illness to my cast, covid or not! I'd rather my director have to figure out what to do without me than without half the cast!

tests can be expensive - if you need free tests and masks go to covidactionmap.org to see if you have a mask bloc who can help!

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Theatre spaces don't make it easy and it'd be way less of a risk if there were still audience mask requirements. I hope that more people in the performing arts start caring enough to make it safer for all of us. Theatre should be inclusive for everyone on stage and off!

ask yourself:

- How many people are in the room with me? How important is it that they see my whole face right now?
- If there's intimacy in the show, is there any room for adjustments? Would it hurt to fake a stage kiss?
  (covid is airborne, but other viruses can spread through saliva!)
- Would my theatre be willing to implement safety measures like air filtration and masked audiences if I brought it up? What about mask requirements for one performance?
- Do I have a mask bloc near me who can help?

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